M 245 Next to manioc, bananas occupy the first rank among the native crops, at least among the peoples of Lake Leopold II, the [59] lower Lukenie, and the region between the Congo and the Kasai. Among the tribes of the upper Lukenie, cultivation of banana trees is less developed, and in the Bena Dibele-Kole region it is almost completely absent.

The natives prefer to cultivate the large banana. It is less juicy and more floury than the small one and yields larger crops. The banana groves are always set up near the village and most often directly behind the dwellings. It follows that these groves have the general shape of the village and, in a way, frame it.

Banana trees, in order to thrive, must be planted in very fertile soil which has been well cleared and deeply turned. To promote their growth and increase their yield, the natives dump into the banana groves all the waste from the kitchen, ordure, ashes, and sweepings from the regular cleaning of the village

S [346]

Fig. 39. Hut for the Nkisi of the Hunt and a Banana Tree with Flower and Fruit, Village of Madjuku, Bobaie Tribe.

M [574] and huts. They also go into the groves to answer the calls of nature.

M 243 Maize is not cultivated on an important scale. Beyond the post at Tolo, maize seems to be completely unknown. Among

291 embarrassed by the glances of others. This feeling extends even to
834 other parts of the body which, irrespective of the degree of culture they have reached, most peoples try to cover. [55]

834 2) Between persons of the same sex and age a certain freedom
514 is permitted. This may be observed especially among young boys when they have to urinate. In our countries of Europe the situation is no different. I must say, however, that I have only noticed this freedom in the schools and never in the villages of the interior. Is there a gap in my observations, or should this laxity in the schools be attributed to the influence of the law of least effort (the suitable places in the schools are at some distance) and to the lack of leisure available to the pupils given the shortness of recreation periods on the one hand and their love of play on the other? It is also possible that among these boys modesty has barely made its appearance, since this feeling is strongly linked to the sexual instinct and awakens only with the latter. It would also seem that living in a group tends to reduce the power of modesty.

834 3) It is obvious that sexual excitement runs counter to modesty
832 and that sometimes -- especially among young people -- immodest acts may be used to arouse another person, especially in situations, such as bathing, which lend themselves easily to such actions.

515 4) Bathers, whether washing or swimming, are very careless,
834 especially when they are in a group of their own sex and age. In former times no doubt they did not indulge in the luxury of even a rudimentary bathing costume. But at the present time it is not at all difficult for them to obtain the small piece of cloth needed for that purpose. Nevertheless, nude bathing in rivers and streams is a common practice. It is far more frequent among women than among men. The natives with whom I have discussed the subject attribute this fact to levity and a lack of con[illegible]; but they see nothing very wrong in it. Whether or not [56] the bathers are in a group also seems to make a difference. If you surprise one or two people under such circumstances, they will hide in haste. If, on the other hand, you find a dozen, they will not move; on the contrary, they will interrupt their toilette to watch you pass. Perhaps they are simply unconcerned about their nakedness. But it is also possible that they

which do not shock others at all. (1)

1. These comments are applicable also to peoples in other parts of the world.

The general rule of decorum among the Nkundó permits the use of such terms only among equals. Their use when speaking to inferiors is tolerated but not approved of. The use of obscenities when speaking to any strangers meets with definite disapproval. Among persons of different sexes the prohibition is particularly strict.

Nevertheless, the use of these expressions is judged less severely if they are uttered in a moment of anger or as a reprimand, even in the presence of a member of the opposite sex.

Exclamations of anger, vexation, and sorrow are often nothing but obscenities (2). No one is shocked by them in such situations.

2. See "Les Coutumes Funéraires" [Funeral Customs], No. 1, to be published in Anthropos.

Some elderly or more modest persons do not make use of them, however; if the habit of using a particular expression is thoroughly ingrained, they may make a slight change in its pronounciation (as is common for some of our "swear words").

To circumvent the difficulties caused by the need to use certain words frequently, [59] euphemisms are coined to take their place. Thus the Nkundó say: fitswá bokako w'ákusa, "I am going behind the house," to indicate that they are going to urinate, and njótsw'ésendó, "I am going for small pieces of firewood," or njótsw'óténa lokásá, "I am going to pick a leaf," meaning that they are going to the toilet. On the way they say: fijeta felé, "I am leaving the path" or "I am going to the forest." A husband is permitted to use accurate terminology when speaking to his wife, but it is considered very improper for her to do so in speaking to him.

When someone is satisfying a natural need, others keep a distance away from him; they will not even speak to him. Moreover, the person would not reply even if he were called. A woman will not

514 576 even answer her husband, but he may indicate his presence by coughing lightly.

514 576 578 831 Any infraction of these rules is considered a grave insult. A person offended in this manner may seek revenge by violent means, either personally or through the medium of his son, brother, etc. According to native justice he will always be in the right, even if the quarrel becomes bloody. The simple act of uttering obscenities while passing in front of a house in which there is someone who is entitled to the speaker's respect may result in reprisals by the latter. (1)

1. See Jadot, Blancs et Noirs au Congo belge [Whites and Blacks in the Belgian Congo], p. 90.

578 834 Crude language is especially reprehensible and wounding if it contains allusions to incest or other reflections on a relative whom the speaker wants to insult. And it must be admitted that such expressions may go beyond the limits (for example: coi cum patre, matre, fratre, sorore, etc.). In connection with this topic it should be noted that reference is always made to a relative of the opposite sex to that of the person who is directly or indirectly being addressed. Furthermore, licentious talk and the use of indecorous language are more severely condemned when they take place in the presence of [559] women and old people [60] or are said by a slave in front of his master, by a Botswa in front of a Bootó (1).

1. See Introduction, footnote 2, p. 4.

578 684 834 If a man catches anyone uttering obscenities in front of his wife, especially if they are addressed to her personally, he can start action in adultery proceedings. If the woman refuses to listen to the seducer, she will not answer him, or sometimes, annoyed at the insult, she may retort by insulting his mother. She can complain, but generally she does not do so. Is she ashamed, or is she afraid that the tempter might make public some excess in her conduct which he has discovered? In any case a woman is more sensitive than a man to the

She does no work in the farm or kitchen. She always has an ebila to wait on her. If her family has no member they can let her have, she will borrow an ebila from a distant relative or a friend.

A nkɔndɛ does not travel on foot; she is carried in a hammock (hunting net). Her husband accompanies her on foot, however. But this was done only for a true nkɔndɛ of a rich man, and the custom is disappearing today.

A favorite may not leave her husband, even to go and see her parents. In the past some men were so jealous of their favorites that they would not allow them to satisfy even their most private needs unless they themselves or some sentinel (usually a lɔtswɛ) stood watch. A man could not even go into the vicinity of her hut, which is built just behind the husband's shed. For although the husband is sometimes tolerant of the passions of his other wives, he always shows an intransigeant jealousy [346] in relation to his favorite. He never travels without having her accompany him.

The favorite has the honor of performing small personal services for her husband; she cuts his hair, helps him in the removal of body hair, scratches his pustules from ringworm or prickly heat, anoints him with oil, paints him with ngɔla, and, in a word, performs all the tasks connected with his appearance and hygiene.

Out of love for his favorite, her husband can buy her corpse for the price of a slave (in kind or in money). By doing so he obtains the right to have it buried beside his own while those of the other wives must be buried with their native clans. That is why in some regions a husband calls his favorite his ikundaka (from kunda "to bury"). Nevertheless, if her husband dies before she does, his heirs may not trouble themselves about his wishes and no longer require that the favorite be buried in their cemetery. That is what happened to Bongɔla of Bongíli, whose husband Ikilinganya of Bongangɛ (bɔtɔndɛ) had paid the price of two slaves for this right. When the husband has killed large game, the favorite, like the bomɔtsa, has the right to receive her personal predetermined portion (bosɔndɔ). Her part is the neck or a chop, which in her absence, goes to the sons or their wives. The other wives do not have the same right; each one obtains only an ordinary piece (lisɔndɔ).

[375] [377] On the day set aside for establishing the position of the bolémbé, there is a great feast. All the clans and neighboring villages that have been invited gather at the home of the polygamist in question. He presents the woman to them and addresses the gathering: "Here is the woman whom I want to make my bolémbé, as I have already announced to you. Today I am making public the decision I already made a long time ago. Be it known to all that no man may touch her, or he will be severely punished." Then two women (in rare instances, two men) hold the woman, and the husband unfastens her belt and rips off all her clothing. Then the assistants tie a rope or a belt of mpangé (striped antelope) skin around her, and to it they attach various furs. From that day [378] until her death she may no longer wear the clothing (bitéé) of other women; she must always [360] be dressed in furs. Hence her name, bolémbé wa bikété, "bolémbé with furs." Then her husband gives her pots of palm oil with which she will have to cover herself. Two men approach her; they are chosen among the handsomest in the village (1) (married or single) and are

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1. They are then (sic) relatives of the husband. Nkundó law dictates that no stranger shall perform a function of the slightest importance -- not even that of silencing a gathering. According to their saying, bofaya ikótsi lokéanga, "a stranger does not cut up a guinea hen."

[301] richly adorned with furs, belts of mpangé, beads, raffia fabrics with jagged edges, copper rings on their ankles, etc. Stepping in rhythm, they lead her to the house intended for her which is [302] [304] surrounded by a fence of bokaka posts (Ricinodendron africanum) held together with palms. This hut with its fence is called lóka.

There the bolémbé will reside for months and years (up to three or more, they say). She is secluded there, so to speak, [306] and may not go out. If she needs to go to the banana groves for her personal needs, she covers and surrounds herself with a mat so that no one will see her.

An *nkumu* can never walk alone, but must always be accompanied by others, and on no occasion whatsoever may he run. Even though he never washes, if he is out in the rain and sees everybody else hurrying for shelter, he will not quicken his pace. His movements must be slow and deliberate. The *nkumu* never sleeps alone; waking and sleeping he is attended by someone. But apart from this he is free to go where he wishes. The *nkumu* is not indiscriminate, as others may be, in his private habits, but must use his own latrine at all times, and if travelling must have his own latrine in each place where he stays. The inland *nkumu* frequently take advantage of this custom by hiding their accumulated brass rods at the bottom of a freshly dug latrine. Such hidden wealth will be acquired by an inheritor at the decease of the *nkumu*.

In speaking of himself the *nkumu* never refers to himself by his title but always by his own name.

The couch upon which the *nkumu* sits or reclines during the daytime may not be shared indiscriminately with others, but those permitted to sit upon it at the same time as the *nkumu* are *mami*, women, and Batwa. The reservation of this couch for the use of the *nkumu* is not surprising, but the exceptions are. One explanation given was that women and Batwa are not *bato ba ne*, persons in particular; they do not count for anything in the social life of the community; they are not really 'people'. Another explanation was that they do not pay fines, this being tantamount to saying that they are exempt from laws and therefore cannot break laws even by doing what would be for others an illegal act. The stool of the *nkumu*, however, has closer restrictions in the manner of its use. Besides the *nkumu* only two others may sit upon it, *Nsasa* and *Mpenge*. It is always carried by one of his wives, though not necessarily by any special one.

The restrictions concerning the food of the *nkumu* are many. He may eat food only in his own house, or, if on a journey, in one given over for his use. He may not enter another house to partake of food even if invited to do so. Likewise the *nkumu* may not eat in the forest, or eat or drink anywhere along the road when on a journey, but must wait until he arrives at a village and has a house at his disposal in order to partake of food and drink. He never 'sleeps with hunger'; even if a wife or child should die causing him great sorrow he must partake of food before going to sleep. The Bongando *nkumu* must never go into mourning, and death must be ignored by them, but the inland *nkumu* are permitted to mourn. All food carried to an *nkumu* must be covered, this rule even applying to water. Food must not be placed in a basket with high sides (*ekodi*), but in a shallow one (*mpale*), and no food that has been kept overnight in a pot may be eaten by him: swelling of the abdomen will result. Various foods are taboo, among these all fast-moving snakes, though slow-moving ones may be eaten; light-coloured palm-nuts may not be eaten, and a variety of yam known as *nsukidi* is shunned, for it is with the tough stems of the *nsukidi* that the dying body of the *nkumu* will be bound to ensure the sitting posture necessary for burial.

Among regulations roughly classed as social, we have already covered several in references above, and have referred to the *nkumu* in council. It may be added here that he is expected to agree with the majority of the councillors and not fall out with them. The rules affecting the anger of the *nkumu* are accompanied by severe penalties. There must not be any fighting; if anger is aroused to the point of blows the antagonists